



How to stand for Election - Information for Candidates

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Introduction

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Part 1 - The County Council

There are 60 councillors who make up Devon County Council. (known as Members) whom you elect every four years. The County Council is the overall policymaking body although a great deal of the detailed work is left to Committees or in some cases smaller groups of members. The Council meets 5 times a year, at County Hall, and meetings of the [full Council](#) are held to consider and approve the decisions or recommendations of Committees. Many of the Council's main meetings are [webcast](#).

The County Council is responsible for setting the overall policy framework and for deciding the level of each year's Council Tax. The Council meeting in February also agrees the budget and sets the Council Tax for the following year. The [Guide to Committee Meetings](#) gives further information.

Devon County Council is the largest local authority in South West England and provides education, social care, highways and rights of way, libraries, waste disposal, consumer protection, strategic planning, economic development and regeneration and a wide range of other services. Its budget has to cover;

- Population: 750,100
- Schools and pupils
- Children looked after
- Adults helped to live at home
- Residential and nursing care
- Libraries and Mobile Libraries
- Roads: 12,850 kms (7,985 miles)
- Bridges: 3,500
- Public Rights of Way: 4,940 kms or 3,070 miles
- Streetlights: 71,000
- Illuminated road signs: 10,917
- Recycling Centres: 20

This equates to 85% of all Local Government services being administered by the County Council to people in the administrative county of Devon. See [facts and figures on the County of Devon](#).

The Local Government Act 2000 requires councils to adopt a written constitution which sets out how the Council works, how it makes decisions and how Councillors and officers should work and behave.

The [Constitution](#) covers in detail areas such as;

- The Council's Executive arrangements
- Scheme of delegation
- Terms of reference for committees
- Procedural rules for all committees
- Standing orders
- Code of conduct for Members
- Code of conduct for officers
- The professional staff structure, including the roles and responsibilities of the Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer, County Treasurer and other Heads of Services
- Audit arrangements

As you can see, the [Constitution](#) covers a number of separate documents and runs to over 200 pages. It is updated when required, in line with new and changing legislation or Government Regulations or structural changes within the organisation.

The most important issues from a Councillors perspective are the

- [Code of Conduct](#)
- [Council Procedure rules](#)
- [Protocol on Member Officer Relations](#)

Any queries on the Council's Constitution should be directed to the Head of Democratic Services

Part 2 - The County Councillor's Role

The Local Government Act 2000 changed the way in which councils organised their business. By September 2001, all English councils had to tell the Government what structure they proposed to adopt based on one of three types of 'executive arrangements' allowed under the Act.

Devon County Council now operates under a Leader and [Executive \(Cabinet\)](#) system.

The Council elects a Leader and appoints the various committees at the Council

[The Council](#) sets the policy framework and decides the level of each year's Council Tax.

[The Leader](#) chairs the Cabinet which takes those key decisions (identified as decisions of political, financial or strategic importance) needed to put the Council's policies into action.

[The Cabinet](#) currently comprises of 8 Councillors but can be up to a maximum of 10 It does

not need to be ‘politically balanced’, and can be made up entirely from members of a majority party and does not have to reflect the make-up of the council as a whole. The Cabinet can take decisions as a group or its individual members can decide matters that fall within their assigned ‘portfolios’.

Non Executive Councillors

- review and question the Cabinet’s decisions and policy (the scrutiny role)
- advise the Cabinet on decisions and policy on local issues
- consider the budget proposed by the Cabinet suggesting amendments and voting on the final budget
- take responsibility (with or without Cabinet members), for regulatory functions, such as planning, licensing and appeals, where it would not normally be appropriate to delegate to an individual member of the Cabinet.

The role of Scrutiny is about Councillors working with each other, officers of the Council, the community and partner organisations for the benefit of everyone in the area.

Legislation also affects the role of a Councillor and how they might work and a few examples are listed below demonstrating the wide reaching role of a Councillor.

The [Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007](#) placed on councils a duty to involve citizens and communities in decision-making. Voluntary and community groups can help councillors encourage citizens to participate. The Act also saw councillors, as democratically elected strategic leaders and convenors of local partnerships, looking across all public services, not just those that are the responsibility of local government.

The [Localism Act 2011](#) was an important part of Government’s ambitions to devolve power to the local level. It provides some tools for local communities and councils to act on communities’ needs and aspirations. It is therefore important for Councillors to engage with their community in a positive and proactive way.

The future landscape for Local Government is rapidly changing, all of which changes and influences what the role of a Councillor is and will be. For example, the [Cities and Local Government Devolution Act \(2016\)](#) which became law in January 2016 and provides the legal framework for the implementation of devolution deals with combined authorities and other areas. You can find out more about [Devolution](#) here.

Committees - A lot of this work is done through committees which must be politically balanced (with their membership reflecting the relative strengths of the different political groups on the Council), publish their papers in advance and allow the press and public to

attend meetings (except for a few special categories of business).

Outside Organisations – Councillors may also represent the Council on a number of outside organisations — school governing bodies, local strategic partnerships, arts and community organisations, charities and trusts for example.

Being a councillor is a big responsibility, but also very rewarding. Community Leadership is at the heart of Modern Local Government and the majority of councillors seek re-election.

Part 3 - Political Parties

If you are thinking of standing as a candidate for a particular political party then you should first get in touch with that party's local organisation.

Many parties also have a national website, through which you can get information about how they operate in your area. The parties currently represented on the County Council are:

- [Conservative Party](#)
- [Labour Party](#)
- [Liberal Democrats](#)
- [UK Independence Party](#)
- [Green Party](#)

Links to many other political parties are available on the [Parliament](#) webpages.

There is also useful information for candidates, agents and political parties on the [Electoral Commission](#) website.

Part 4 - Independent Councillors

If you plan to stand for the County Council as an independent councillor, your local District or City Council's Electoral Registration Officer can advise you about what you'll need to do to get your name on the ballot.

You can find out more information on The Independent Group on the [Local Government Association website](#)

Further information and advice is available from:

LGA Independent Group
Local Government House
18 Smith Square
London
SW1P 3HZ
Phone: 020 7664 3224
Email: independent.group@lga.local.gov.uk

In addition, there is additional guidance for Independent Councillors with corresponding advice outlining [a range of support mechanisms to members](#).

Part 5 - Life as a Councillor

We have tried below to answer some of the most common questions about the councillor role.

The Basics

What is the term of office?	County Councillors serve a four-year term. If you are elected at a by-election, you serve until the next scheduled Council elections.
How much of my time will it all take up?	According to the commitments you take on, this can vary from a few hours each week to several hours each day. There are some facts and figures in the survey National Census of Local Authority Councillors) which you may find helpful. You will of course need to attend meetings at County Hall in Exeter and other locations across the County. Most of these are held during the day and so, if you are working, you will need an understanding employer. Many Councillors also represent the Council on one or more outside bodies. These vary from national organisations such as the Local Government Association and the County Councils Network through to regional bodies such as the Environment Agency or the Devon and Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority, and down to local organisations or charitable trusts. For most of the meetings you attend there will usually be an agenda and reports which you will need to read carefully beforehand. The people you represent will look to you for help in dealing with their problems, whether or not these fall strictly within the County Council's remit. You are likely to receive a lot of emails and a great many telephone calls. Not every caller will telephone at what you might think is a reasonable hour!
How will I be contacted?	You may be contacted by phone or post but most likely by email. The section titled 'Computers and Communications' explains what the Council provides for you in terms of IT equipment.

Is there training for Councillors?	<p>Induction and training for new and returning Councillors is given after the elections. This is alongside an on-going programme of learning and development. We are currently working on a new induction programme for new (and returning) Councillors, please contact Karen Strahan 01392 382264 if you want further information or a copy of the programme (available in the new year 2021). Of course, with the ongoing pandemic, the mechanism for delivery of the 2021 induction programme is still to be decided but we hope a number of face to face sessions along with webinars and / or virtual delivery will form the basis. If you'd like to know what committee and council meetings are like, you are welcome to view these. Our calendar of meetings is published on the internet. Meetings of the Council, the Cabinet and some other committees are webcast on the internet. All meetings are currently live streamed and can be viewed using the link on the agenda page for the meeting.</p>
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Support for you - These facilities and services could change according to decisions made by any new Council .

COMMON QUESTIONS	ANSWERS
Will I have a secretary?	No, not unless you become Chair of the Council or Leader of the Council. Cabinet Members will receive support from officers within the Services to which their portfolio relates. The Member Services Unit can provide some basic administrative support for all Members.
Will I have my own office at County Hall?	No, although each political group has its own office and group room which you will be able to share. You will also have use of the facilities in the Members' Lounge.
What expenses can I claim?	Each year you will receive a basic allowance (currently £13,213) paid in monthly instalments. This is to cover your constituency duties, correspondence, telephone calls, attendance at meetings of the County Council, committees and other authorised meetings, attendance at seminars and conferences, outside bodies to which you have been appointed and Parish Council meetings. Details of the Members Allowances Scheme can be found in the Council's Constitution at part 7. Certain 'approved duties' are eligible for travel and/or subsistence allowances. Some members also receive a Special Responsibility Allowance in recognition of particular duties they undertake (for example chair's of committees). This is something that each new Council considers and decides upon. You may also claim a carers allowance in certain circumstances for engaging a carer for a dependant family member living at home (e.g. a child under 14, an elderly person or someone with a physical or mental disability) and / or childcare costs.

Support	To help you carry out your duties, you will be able to call on information and advice from the professional officers of the Council. This is in addition to the assistance from the Democratic Services and Scrutiny Secretariat and Member Services as highlighted above.
The Democratic Services & Scrutiny Secretariat & Member Services Unit in the Legal & Communications Department	These may well be the officers you see most often. They service Council meetings and committees by convening meetings and writing the minutes. They are generally responsible for keeping the democratic system running smoothly. The team is available to help you with queries about matters such as Standing Orders (the basic rules), allowances and declarations of interest. The unit also acts as a first point of contact with the professional side of the organisation and can help you with the drafting of resolutions, amendments and questions that you may wish to put forward at meetings. They can also make travel arrangements for any events that you may attend on behalf of the Council.
Scrutiny Team	Scrutiny in Devon County Council is supported by a small team of officers , who provide research, advice, report writing and other support for elected Members' scrutiny work and in particular for the task groups which Scrutiny Committees have set up to look at particular topics in detail.
Locality Officers	There is one Locality Officer for each District, other than the City of Exeter. They can assist you with your constituency work, and act as a link to a variety of official and voluntary organisations operating in your area but their key role is 'Community Planning' which is one way of giving local people the opportunity to create a shared vision for their area and identify priorities for action which are agreed by a wide range of people, organisations and groups. They work with each of the District Councils in Devon. They were appointed to enable the County Council to fulfil its statutory duty 'to prepare community strategies for promoting or improving the economic, social and environmental well-being of the County, and contribute to the achievement of sustainable development in the UK' as part of the Governments modernising agenda.
Computers and Communications (What do we provide)	The Council currently (although this is being reviewed) provides its members with a 'Windows' device', running Microsoft Office 365™ products. This may be a laptop or hybrid device. Councillors will be provided with training in using this system and technical support from the Council's staff. Much of the Council's business is now being done by office 365, Microsoft Teams and Email and the Council regards this as the primary means of communication. It is vital that Members take advantage or they risk missing out on important information. Councillors need to be able to take full advantage of these systems to keep themselves fully in the picture.

Insurance	The Council covers Councillors' legal liability in respect of any claims that may be made against them as a result of carrying out their duties. We also provide a personal accident policy. However, please don't get the impression that being a Councillor is a dangerous job!
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Part 6 - Ethics and Standards

Code of Conduct – The Localism Act 2011 requires Councils to adopt a Code of Conduct which deals with the conduct expected of its elected and co-opted members when they are acting in their official capacity. The Code of Conduct is also required to include appropriate provisions relating to the registration and disclosure of pecuniary and other interests.

Standards Committee – The County Council's [Standards Committee](#) is a group of people appointed by the Council to help it maintain and promote high ethical standards. The Committee is made up of Councillors and co-opted members drawn from the community (who are not councillors or employees of the County Council).

Local Protocol – The County Council has adopted its own local protocol governing relations between councillors and professional officers. This can be found in the [Council's Constitution](#). However, a new Model Code of Conduct has been issued by the Local Government Association which will be considered for adoption in the new year (2021).

Monitoring Officer – The Council has a Monitoring Officer whose job it is to advise the Council and Councillors on questions of conduct and ethics. In the end however, each individual is responsible for the propriety of their own actions.

Further information is available about [Standards, Ethics and Councillor Complaints](#).

Part 7 - Local Government in Devon

Local Government in Devon

For more information about local government in Devon and the different services that the County and District Councils are responsible please see [Public Services in Devon](#).

Councillor's roles

The role of a Local Authority Councillor continues to evolve and be an area of continuing

Government focus. Councillors are a bridge linking the community and the council, therefore Councillors need to develop and deliver in a community leadership role. The role also demands the ability to balance the needs of one community with a wider agenda which covers the entire council's area.

Government recognises the importance of this role, and the role of the councillor as a community leader has never been more vital. Changes in local government have, over the past few years, reshaped the way elected members work and how they engage with the communities they represent. In a climate of political and economic uncertainty, the ability of elected members to work effectively with and on behalf of their communities is more important than ever.

It is important that the role of councillor is understood by all involved. The public, businesses, partners and council officers have to understand what councillors do, how they do it, as well as the limitations of the role. Councillors need to continue to develop their community leadership role, utilising the democratic processes open to them (e.g. committee meetings, area or ward meetings, scrutiny committees). Councillors are a conduit between the community and the council, working to address local issues based on local needs and knowledge. The Council will provide information and support to councillors, to assist them in performing this critical role, whatever Local Government Structures are in place in the future.

Councillors are increasingly being asked to do more as their role expands into all areas of policy through Scrutiny, area committees, neighbourhood working and increasing work linked to partnerships.

The Local Government Association has published documents on the role of a Councillor;

- [The Councillors Role'](#)
- [Be a Councillor](#)
- [Community Leadership](#)

A Councillor:

- provides a voice for and help to all members of the community
- makes decisions on behalf of residents
- contributes to council policy and strategy
- has responsibility for scrutiny (checking and monitoring what the council does)
- has regulatory duties (making sure laws are kept to, e.g. planning)
- is a community leader

What does a councillor do for the community / community leadership?

Councillors take a comprehensive view of the needs and priorities of local areas and lead in the work that is needed to meet these needs. This often takes place in partnership with other organisations and councillors may:-

- hold surgeries, where local people can ask for help or advice
- follow up on issues raised at these surgeries
- represent the community within the council and to other organisations
- develops links with all parts of the community
- support and be involved with local partnerships and organisations
- campaign on local issues
- win resources for the ward, e.g. money for local organisations or regeneration
- use [locality budgets](#) to help with local projects

Scrutiny

There is an important role for a councillor – called Scrutiny – which is to review council policies and activities. All councils must have this function and must have one such committee, made up of councillors who are not members of the Cabinet. The Council's Scrutiny rules are contained within the [Council's Constitution](#). There are dedicated [Scrutiny pages](#) that explain further about the role

Scrutiny takes in a varied range of activities which include:

- review and development of the council's policies
- make policy and budget proposals to the council
- review of proposed executive decisions
- call in or review of decisions before they are implemented
- call Cabinet to account
- performance monitoring and review
- scrutiny of other local organisations, including health services

Part 8 - Who Knows Where The Time Goes

A variety of different studies have been carried out over the years on how long councillors spend on their duties.

The [National Census of Local Authority Councillors](#) is a publication conducted every few years to provide the most comprehensive ‘snapshots’ of local government representation and analysis of trends over time. This helps with the overview of Councillor roles, especially in terms of their place shaping and what is required in terms of assistance. If you follow the link, there is both an Executive summary of the report and also a full version which gives lots of

detail around age profiles, employment status, age, gender and ethnic origin, amongst other things.

The census asks councillors about:

- their work as councillors
- their views on a range of issues
- their personal background.

The census ensures that the LGA has accurate information about councillors, and how they carry out their work, and hence receive the best possible support. Accurate data of this nature aids central and local government and political parties in the development of strategies and policies. Some of the main findings are summarised below:

Councillors' work

- On average, Councillors had served for 9.2 years in their current authority; 47% had served for up to 5 years while 11% had done so for more than 20 years;
- 54% of Councillors held a position of responsibility, most commonly membership of the Cabinet/Executive;
- Councillors spent, on average, 22 hours per week on council business, the largest aspect of which was on Council meetings (8 hours); and
- 39% of Councillors were also members of another public body.

Councillors' views

- 85% of Councillors became Councillors in order to serve their community;
- 60% thought that representing local residents was among the most important role of Councillors, and 51% thought the same of supporting local communities;
- 34% of Councillors thought they were very effective in their role, and 57% fairly effective;
- 85% would recommend the role of Councillor to others; and
- 68% intended to stand for re-election.

Councillors' personal characteristics

- 45% of Councillors were retired, and 26% in full or part-time employment;
- 64% of Councillors held other voluntary or unpaid positions, such as school governorships;
- 68% of Councillors held a degree or equivalent qualification; only 3% did not hold any qualification;
- 63% of Councillors were male, and 36% female;

- The average age of councillors in 2018 was 59 years; 15% were aged under-45 and 43% were aged 65 or over;
- 96 % described their ethnic background as white;
- 88% described their sexual orientation as heterosexual or straight;
- 16% had a long-term health problem or disability which limited their daily activities; and
- 36% of Councillors had a responsibility as a carer, most commonly looking after a child.

In addition, the type of Authority can also influence the amount of time spent on duties. The rurality of Devon means that Members may spend longer on travelling than, for example, a Councillor working in a smaller urban environment.

Part 9 - The Basics

Car Parking

Car parking at County Hall is restricted but spaces are available for members. The cobbled area in front of Bellair is reserved primarily for members. Members use of that area will take priority over other users.

- More spaces for members will be reserved behind Bellair on days when the full County Council meets.
- If both reserved areas are full, spaces may be found elsewhere on the campus.

Members should be aware that as part of a Green Travel Plan, there are car parking charges at County Hall. The charges vary depending upon your level of allowance, but for most members it is the lowest banded charge. The same charges apply to Members as they do to staff. Whilst members are able to reclaim the majority of their expenses, this is one charge that Members are not allowed to reclaim.

The Council promotes and encourages both Members and Staff to use green travel alternatives.

Security

Entrance to County Hall is with a smart card which you will get upon your election. This also enables you to access the County Hall buildings.

Smoking

Smoking is not allowed anywhere on the County Hall campus or in any County Council property or buildings.

Part 10 - The County Hall Campus



Bellair and Members' Lounge

Bellair is open to members during normal office hours (except on special occasions). It is closed at weekends.

County Hall's facilities for members are centred in Bellair, an 18th Century house formerly owned by Dame Georgina Buller. The house adjoins the Committee Suite and Council Chamber



Inside Bellair are rooms used by the various political groups on the Council. Tea and coffee making facilities are available for members.

Office accommodation is provided in Bellair but elsewhere for the Leader of the Council and Leader of the main opposition group.

Other than these, the Council does not provide individual Councillors with their own offices or with personal secretaries, but there is some basic administrative support provided by the Member Services Unit (part of the Democratic Services team)

The Members' Lounge has a photocopier and computers for members' use and a range of local government publications on display.

Coaver

The Coaver Cafe is open from 10.00am – 1.30pm

Coaver, which stands in the grounds of County Hall, houses a staff social club with a licensed bar and recreational facilities for Members of the Club and their guests.



Members attending County Hall on business and their guests may use the Cover Café which serves a range of breakfast options, hot and cold snacks as well as a hot meal of the day. A takeaway service is available for all menus and food is also available to order.

The [Coaver Conference Centre](#) provides a range of conference facilities.



County Shop

Open from 8:00am – 3:30pm.

The County Shop is situated on the ground floor in the main building along the corridor opposite the cash point. It offers hot and cold drinks, hot and cold snacks as well as everyday essentials, including milk, biscuits and greeting cards.

Part 11 - Services for Members of the Council

Identification -

- All members of the Council will be given a smartcard (identity badge) which they will need to use when visiting Council premises. This will also be required to enter the car park via the barrier.

Members' stationery

- A range of printed stationery is available through the Member Services Unit.

Document Reproduction

- A photocopier is available for the exclusive use of members in the Bellair lounge. Further services can also be obtained via the Democratic Services and Scrutiny Secretariat.

Computers and Email

- The Council is looking to provide its members with a windows device. Members can chose either a 'laptop' or 'hybrid' device . This will have the Microsoft Office 365 software and any other systems required. For example the Council has the Modern.Gov committee management system which allows access to meetings papers . Each Councillor is offered an email address "@devon.gov.uk".
- Councillors using the Council's ICT will receive basic training and may receive more specialist training and technical support from the Council's staff, if this is required. Regular training will be provided as and when new systems are introduced.
- More and more of the Council's business is being done via electronic communications. Microsoft Teams, Skype and Email is the primary means of communication and, to keep themselves fully in the picture, Councillors must be able to take advantage of these systems, otherwise they may lose out on important information.
- Photographs, contact information and other details about members are posted on the Devon County Council public website for the benefit of the public. See the [Councillor details](#). There is also the opportunity for Members to provide a link to their own websites, blogs and social media profiles if they so chose. However, the Council takes no responsibility for the content contained within such sites.
- There is a PC and photocopier in the Members' Lounge which are exclusively for members' use when at County Hall.

Travel and accommodation arrangements

- There may be instances when, in the course of attending meetings on behalf of the Council, members require assistance in making travel or other arrangements. Travel arrangements can be made through the Member Services Unit.

Telephone calls

- Members may contact staff at the majority of the County Council offices by ringing the Devon County Council Call Centre on: 0345 155 1015 (General Enquiries)

- Other phone numbers can be found on the [contact page](#) for Highways, schools, safeguarding, bus passes, care direct and consumer advice and much more.
- If Members are unsure of whom to speak to about a particular problem it is suggested that they contact the Democratic Services and Scrutiny Secretariat or Members Services Unit at County Hall who will be able to assist them on 01392 382264.
- The Council has a system where the number 01392 383000 can be called and you speak the name of the officer you wish to talk to and the system will connect you.

Members' Information

- Members can elect to receive daily updates from the Council's press office on matters of importance, both locally and nationally and receive weekly updates Inside Devon. Information may also be made available on the Council's intranet site, again called [Inside Devon](#).

Members' postal arrangements

- All outgoing mail to members is sent via the post room at County Hall. This is to prevent members receiving more than one package from County Hall through the post at any one time. Plastic re-usable envelopes are used when necessary.
- Urgent mail will be sent out on the required date. Non-urgent or routine mail will be sent out on a Wednesday and a Friday. If you experience any difficulties with this arrangement please contact a member of the Democratic Services and Scrutiny Secretariat & Member Services Unit.
- In addition to the normal post received through the Royal Mail the facility exists for "non-urgent material" to be left for members in the pigeon holes in the Committee Suite corridor. There is a large rack at the end of the corridor which contains a pigeon hole for each member. Members' names appear at the top of their slot. These pigeon holes will only be used by Officers to leave non-urgent information items for collection or items requested by members. None of the items placed in these pigeon holes will normally be posted on. Items will remain until collected by members or until they are cleared out periodically by the Democratic Services and Scrutiny Secretariat & Member Services Unit.

Facts and Figures

[Facts and Figures](#) brings together a range of statistics, gleaned from a number of sources, about the people of Devon, their social, employment, and economic circumstances, and the commercial and natural environment in which they live. It is intended to be a starting point for informing the people of Devon and to help researchers, planners, policy makers, commerce and industry in their searches for data.

Information Governance Team

The [Data Protection Act 1998](#) is legislation established to protect an individual's privacy by regulating the way their personal data is processed. More information can be found on the [Freedom of Information webpages](#).

Devon County Council is committed to upholding these principles and has a recognised [Data Protection Officer](#) with responsibility for that.

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/democracy/>

